

ADMINISTRATION

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

The Board of Selectmen, collectively, serves as the Town's Chief Executive Officer and, among its other duties, provides strong and active leadership in setting the Town's strategic direction and coordinating the efforts of the various Town agencies. One of the Board's duties is to implement the Master Plan. The Board began implementation of the most recent Master Plan update in November 2010 and continued this work in 2011 and 2012.

The Board made particularly effective use of its liaison function this year, building strong relationships between the members and their assigned committees and departments. In this way, they gain a detailed understanding of projects and issues in each sphere. An important part of each Board meeting is "Liaison Reports," where members update each other on activities at the ground level of operations. In this way, issues can be identified and resolved and cross-functional solutions can be considered and implemented.

Capital Building Projects

The liaison role was used effectively in the capital building projects, beginning with the addition/renovation of Center School, which neared completion at the close of 2012. With 80 % of the construction done, the project ran into several snags that required the Board's involvement. To remedy a sizable schedule slip, the selectmen worked with the Owner's Project Manager and General Contractor (GC) to revise the project plan. When the GC went bankrupt, the Board worked with the surety company to hire a replacement.

The Board broadened its cross-functional approach when forming capital building project committees for the fire house, Randall Library, and the now-vacant Pompo building. To ensure strong representation of the key financial areas, each building committee had a member from the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, and Capital Planning Committee. Additional members were stakeholders and At-Large members. With funds appropriated at a prior town meeting, each hired an architectural firm to create the pre-design plans.

These three committees completed the pre-design process and presented their recommended options at a Special Town Meeting in October 2012, requesting funds for the next stage: design. When voters declined to support the requests, the Board formed an oversight committee composed of senior officials to provide guidance to the project committees in seeking alternatives to their preferred plans. The results will again be presented to Town Meeting.

Economic Development: Lower Village Water, Regional Transportation, and Solar Farms
Providing water to a group of the Lower Village businesses took another step forward with the Conservation Commission's vote to revise a conservation restriction (CR) on the Heritage Lane open space parcel. The revised CR will allow the business owners to drill a well on the land. When Town Meeting approves the CR amendment, the General Court will confirm the change. This improved water supply will allow the businesses to expand.

In January, the Board approved an application for one of the Governor's Community Innovation Challenge grants on regional transportation. Together with five neighboring towns and Clock Tower Place, Stow received a grant to study opportunities to regionalize dispatch services and vehicle use. The first phase of the project was to build a database of the communities' van use, using GPS/GIS tracking devices installed in the vehicles.

Two commercial solar businesses came to town: one on vacant brownfield land on Delaney Street and one at Minute Man Air Field on land restricted by the FAA. Both projects make good use of otherwise undevelopable land and could result in a modest but regular income stream for the town. The Board's liaison to the assessors worked with that department and Town Counsel to write PILOT agreements (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) to be approved by the Board and the voters.

Affordable Housing

The Board continued to take every opportunity possible to underscore its support of the town's two affordable housing projects: Pilot Grove II and Plantation Apartments II. Pilot Grove II is in the final stages of permitting and financing approvals. Plantation Apartments II is expected to move forward as the Pilot Grove II project is completed.

Fiscal Responsibility

In January, presented with notice from the Nashoba Regional School District of its plan to borrow an estimated \$3,860,000 for a high school athletic complex, the Board worked to clarify the process for the district's borrowing and to ensure that the question came before the voters.

In February, the Board heard the Town Administrator's preliminary fiscal year 2013 budget report, in which the town's debt service was the primary driver. Due to interest payments on the Center School project borrowing, FY 13 would see a \$200,000 increase in expenses over FY 2012. However, due in large part to the Town Administrator's management of the budgets over time and the departments' frugal spending, the town finances were in excellent condition, easing the concern about debt.

Community

One of the more pleasurable duties of the Board is acknowledging the contributions of many residents in Stow. They sincerely appreciate the years of dedicated service and, now, retirement of Town officials Russ and Kathleen Willis, Library Director Susan Wysk, Hudson Road Auto owner George Veracka, Hudson Light & Power representative Ed Brown, Stow West School Society founder Connie Schwarzkopf, and our Veterans Service Officer Brian Stearns. The Board enthusiastically thanks the new Troop 1 Eagle Scouts for their community projects in Stow and welcomes our new Veterans Service Officer Joe Jacobs.

Respectfully submitted,

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Thomas E. Ryan III, Clerk
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